

NEWS RELEASE

U. S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE - REGIONAL

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PROPOSES THREATENED STATUS FOR WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed that the Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover, a small, pale-colored shorebird, be designated as a threatened species. The Service found that critical habitat for the western snowy plover is undeterminable at this time.

The Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover nests primarily on sand spits and beaches of Washington, Oregon, California, and Mexico. Plovers winter from Oregon south, with the majority of birds wintering south of Bodega Bay, California. A separate interior population of the western snowy plover breeds in areas of Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and north-central Texas, as well as coastal areas of southern Texas, and possibly northeastern Mexico; that population is not covered by today's listing proposal. For the three states, the estimated population for the snowy plover is under 1,500 birds.

Twenty-eight snowy plover breeding areas currently exist on the Pacific coast of the United States. Declines in both nesting areas and the breeding populations have been documented in all three states. The wintering population has also declined in southern California.

The Pacific coast population of the snowy plover is threatened primarily by human disturbance, loss of nesting habitat to development, encroachment by European beachgrass on the species' nesting grounds, and at some sites, predation by a variety of birds and mammals, particularly American crows, ravens, and red foxes.

A complete description of the Service's proposal to list the Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover will be published in the Federal Register on January 14, 1992. Public comments on the proposal will be taken for 60 days after Federal Register publication and should be sent to: Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1803, Sacramento, California, 95825-1846. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment only, during normal business hours at this address.

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